

NJCFS NEWSLETTER

Office of Management and Budget
Accounting Bureau

June 1998

Issue #23

TRAVEL DE-CENTRALIZATION

With the issuance of Circular Letter 98-03-OMB, effective May 1, 1998, the formal delegation of authority for the approval and processing of travel transactions from OMB to the agencies has begun. Some of the most prominent changes brought about by the new circular letter include:

- **Documentation** - Agencies are now responsible for the review and retention of all documentation supporting travel transactions. This material will no longer be submitted to OMB's Accounting Compliance Unit.
- **Security** - Approval levels for all travel transactions have been reduced from five to four. As the final phase of the transfer of authority for these transactions, each agency will be contacted to designate the individual(s) whose NJCFS security profiles will be modified to include this fourth level approval authority for travel transactions. Once this is accomplished, OMB's involvement with agency travel activity will be limited to oversight.
- **Maximum Attendance** - The maximum number of staff from one agency that may attend a travel event without the approval of the Director, OMB, has been changed from two to five. Justification for attendance by more than five must be submitted to Accounting Compliance as in the past. The Event Table (EVNT) will continue to be maintained by OMB; requests for Event Codes should continue to be submitted to Jess Bodnar, Accounting Compliance Unit.
- **Transition** - During the period before security has been changed to permit full approval and processing by agency staff, Accounting Compliance staff will continue to apply the fourth level of approval and process all travel transactions. This will be done on-line following a review of transaction screens for any discrepancies or errors. Agencies will be contacted by telephone to clarify questionable items. Once an agency receives the necessary security, this scrutiny by Accounting Compliance will cease.
- **Washington Travel** - As indicated in the published material and general messages, all travel to Washington, DC which requires the approval of the Governor's Office (that is, travel other than for conferences or training) will now be submitted directly by the respective agencies rather than by Accounting Compliance. The data required includes prints of all screens (including Text) of the Travel Authorization (TE) transaction and the agenda relating to the meeting. This material is faxed to:
Roz Sherman
Office of Chief of Staff
FAX Number - 609-777-0944
Telephone - 609-777-2203
- **Prior Year Payments** - Language in the Appropriations Act providing for the payment of liabilities incurred in the prior fiscal year will no longer be interpreted to include payment of travel mileage expenses incurred in the prior fiscal year. Employees have until the end of July to submit such payment requests for fiscal year 1998.

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Agency staff are encouraged to continue to contact the staff of Accounting Compliance for any assistance or information which they may require to ensure that the delegation of this authority is successfully accomplished.

OPEN TRAVEL REQUISITIONS

A report of Outstanding Travel Requisitions will be distributed to agencies periodically from now until fiscal year end to facilitate agency action. Agencies should review open travel requisitions for events that have been concluded; those which are no longer needed should be closed out. Cancellation of unneeded balances in those pre-encumbrances will release the amounts remaining for use by the agency for other expenses.

It is recommended that all open requisitions which the agency deems to be necessary be converted to Agency Orders (AO's); in this way, the agency will assign their own identification number to the order documents. Otherwise, at fiscal year end, all outstanding travel requisitions will be converted to Agency Orders (AO's) by OMB's Accounting Bureau. In that process, the Accounting Bureau will give the newly converted AO's an identification code within the document number which agencies will then have to learn and use to access orders relating to their travel events.

TRAVEL SERVICES ACTION FLAG

As agencies prepare to assume full responsibility for reviewing, approving and processing their travel transactions in NJCFS, they are reminded of the importance of using the Travel Services Action Flag field on Travel Authorization (TE/TH) transactions. By entering a "Y" in this field,

an entry is automatically made on the Travel Services Action Table (TSAC) when the Travel Authorization is accepted by the system. This entry alerts the travel services contractor (American Express) to the agency's need to obtain air or rail tickets for the event in question and begins that process. Failure to use the Travel Services Action Flag may result in an employee's inability to attend an event due to the lack of transportation.

PURCHASING CARD

The Department of the Treasury, Office of the State Treasurer, has initiated a purchasing card pilot/prototype program. The Administrative Office of the Courts, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs are participating in this pilot program.

The program is designed to streamline New Jersey's payment process for purchases less than \$2,500. During the initial stage of the pilot program, use of the Visa purchasing card is limited to non-MACS-E purchases such as legal advertising, memberships, subscriptions and petty cash expenditures.

To accommodate wider use of the purchasing card, system modifications will be made to NJCFS/MACS-E to capture the merchant (vendor) information, the required accounting and purchasing information, as well as the summarized payment to the bank. New screens will be developed in the MACS-E to record the use of the purchasing card and the subsequent reconciliation to the purchasing card statement from the bank. In addition, the vendor table (VEND) in the NJCFS will be modified to add a field to capture the dollar amount paid for

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procurement card purchases. Modification to the NJCFS for the purchasing card process is dependent upon OTIS completion of the Year 2000 programming changes.

NJCFS will not be available from 4 p.m. on June 30, 1998 to 1 p.m. on July 1, 1998, and from 5 p.m. on July 31, 1998 to 7 a.m. on August 3, 1998.

A REMINDER: ACCOUNTING PERIOD MUST BE ENTERED IN JULY

The Accounting Period must be entered on all transactions during the month of July. Since two accounting periods will be open in July, accounting period "12 98" must be entered on transactions applicable to fiscal year 1998 and earlier, while "01 99" must be entered on transactions applicable to fiscal year 1999. This procedure is important to follow so that revenues and expenditures are recorded in the appropriate fiscal year for reporting purposes.

Following July, when accounting period "12 98" is closed, transactions that must still be recorded in accounting fiscal year 1998 must reference the adjustment period of "13 98." All transactions with Accounting Period "13 98" will result in an error message which must be overridden by OMB.

If you have any questions concerning the use of the Accounting Period field, please contact Kim Shidlowksi (609-292-5259) of the Accounting Operations Unit of OMB.

SYSTEM AVAILABILITY

To facilitate the keying of year-end transactions by the agencies, NJCFS will be available the following Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.: June 20, June 27, July 18, and July 25.

DEFICIT BALANCES

As stated in Department of the Treasury's Circular Letter 98-13-OMB, "Year-End Guidelines for Fiscal Year 1998," any fiscal officer, business manager, or director of administration could be held liable if salary accounts (or any other accounts) are allowed to go deficit without immediate corrective action. It is, therefore, the responsibility of each fiscal officer to make certain that no fiscal year 1998 appropriation account closes the fiscal year with a negative balance.

Agency fiscal officers should not rely on last-minute processing of transfers or other accounting documents to relieve the deficits. Preparation and submission of deficit relieving documents should have started immediately upon receipt of the circular letter. Because of the time constraints involved, all transfers requiring Office of Legislative Services approval must be submitted to OMB no later than July 1, 1998.

All deficits on the Appropriation table (APPR) must be resolved by July 31, 1998. Deficits on the Expense Budget table (EXPB) do not have to be eliminated.

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NJCFS TRAINING

Agencies have contacted OMB Accounting Bureau with their NJCFS training needs. Due to the decentralization of travel transactions, travel module training is being conducted first. The Accounting Bureau staff assigned to the NJCFS training effort will contact agencies to schedule training in all other modules.

Q&A

This issue we will address the error message DOCUMENT IN USE.

- Q. Why does my document contain the error message DOCUMENT IN USE? How do I correct this error?
- A. If you receive the error message DOCUMENT IN USE when trying to approve or process documents that have been previously processed or edited, it probably means that you or someone else did not properly exit the document. Pausing or leafing does not properly exit you from documents. After editing or approving, you should exit the document with the E command.

If you receive this error when attempting to process a document, first make sure that no other user has that document open at that time. If you are certain it is not in use, the document must be freed before it can be opened. Use the following method to free-up the document:

Locate the document on the SUSF and enter "F" in the FUNCTION field. Make certain that "R" or "S" is displayed in the ACTION field. Place an "X" in the SEL column next to the document, and press enter. The document is now freed.

NEWSLETTER MAILINGS

The Office of Management and Budget makes every attempt to keep its mailing lists up-to-date and accurate. However, we are not always aware of personnel changes that may occur in the NJCFS user community. To keep our NJCFS Newsletter mailing list current, please contact Linda Campbell, OMB Accounting Bureau, 609-292-6391 if:

- You currently receive the NJCFS Newsletter and your name, title or address is incorrect
- You have replaced someone who received the Newsletter in the past
- You wish to be added to or deleted from our mailing list.